

# OLDE NEWS

## SUMMER 2022 EDITION



## Table of Contents

- 2-3 Letter from the Chair
- 4-5 Current Students' Summer Projects
- 6-7 The Origin of Globalization by Xue Zhang
- 8 Announcements
- 9 Interview with Liz Matsushita
- 10 What are Alumni up to? Let's Catch Up!
- 11 Summer Reading
- 12 Let's Get Sentimental!

# From the Chair




## Richard F. Scholz Professor of History and Humanities, David Garrett

Welcome! or, Welcome back! -- whether you are starting your thesis, starting Reed, or somewhere in between. It's great to be able to meet and converse in person, and gratifying to see the thoughtful and responsible actions that keep our classes and community together physically.

We welcome two new members to the department: Xue Zhang, who is teaching Humanities 231/2 and Chinese and East Asian history conferences; and Liz Matsushita, who is teaching Humanities 110 and conferences in North African and Middle Eastern history. Administratively, I (David) am rotating into the position of chair (thank you, Josh, for your leadership and service!).

I confess that I was so flummoxed by what to write in the Chair's letter that I had to ask for an extension. I am generally flummoxed these days: as a child of the Cold War who graduated from college just as the Berlin Wall fell, the global meta-narrative of my life had been (part I) the Cold War and the "victory" of the US, the "West," "capitalism," in the competition with the USSR, "the Soviet Bloc", "communism"; and (part II) the move to a neo-liberal world that was "the end of history." Then, suddenly, chapter 50--something of the novel that is my life introduced an abrupt shift in the larger narrative, and started a (part III) that is still undefined, and shows that history is certainly not over.

In my confusion, I dedicated much of my summer reading to Ukraine, to modern East Slavic history, to the "Pale of Settlement", to the region and time that Tim Snyder hauntingly calls "the Bloodlands."<sup>1</sup> There is no single name for the vast lowland basin formed as the Dniester, the Dnieper and the Don flow to the Black Sea. Today, it is divided into Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, western Russia; the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman empire all claimed parts of it. Different terms, different understandings of history, of identity, but all gesturing at the same place: a region in Europe that has repeatedly over the past century and a half been the site of astounding human violence.



In graduate school I often TAed for modern European history lecture classes, so nothing in the details or evidence in Snyder's book surprised me, horrible though they are. Snyder challenges the historical consciousness of the US and western Europe not through novel facts, but through perspective. He rejects viewing the Bloodlands through nationalist lenses, or through the binary of Axis/Allies. He equally resists interpreting this history through simple capitalist/fascist/communist divisions. Snyder calls on us to engage the region's history from the vantage point of the Bloodlands themselves. He argues straightforwardly that the central conflict in both World Wars was control of this vast, rich agricultural region. Because of Snyder's book (with my apologies to *Downtown Abbey* and post-1918 European humanities), I now view the Eastern Front as more important in World War I (1914-18) as well as in World War II (1939-45): a staggering death toll; the collapse, first, of the Russian empire, and then of its Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman neighbors; the reversal by the Versailles Treaty of 1919 of a commanding victory for Germany in the east. Snyder's history of 20th century Europe is one of multi-ethnic empires broken apart by war; of the violent ideology of nationalism that structured their post-war division; and of the oppression, erasure, and mass murder of "minorities" within these new nation-states (including the performatively multi-national Soviet Union). For Snyder, the question of whether the Nazi regime or Soviet regime killed more people in the Bloodlands misses the point: the famine of the Holodomor, the murders and gulags of the purges, the anti-semitic genocide of the Holocaust, are chapters in the same history. And viewing the past century from the perspective of Kyiv, of Minsk, of Crimea and Lviv, gives us radically different understanding than viewing it from Washington, London, Paris, or Portland.

Snyder's understanding of the Bloodlands draws from that of *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*, written in the 1960s by Anatoly Kuznetsov.<sup>2</sup> Kuznetsov was a 12-year old boy in Kyiv when the Germans occupied the city and massacred much of the city's Jewish population in the ravine of Babi Yar over a weeklong period in 1941. A censored edition of *Babi Yar* was published in Russia in 1966; in 1968, Kuznetsov escaped the Soviet Union carrying microfilm of the original manuscript. He published a revised and expanded edition in Russian and then in English in the 1970s. It's an extraordinary work of history and art, one that views three years of German occupation and genocidal violence through the eyes of a boy entering his teens. Gazing on that violence with a directness that stuns, *Babi Yar* also offers a scathing critique of the "official" history of the Great Patriotic War so central to the Soviet Union's historical consciousness and mythology, and that of Russia today.

The violence to which Ukraine is subject today is morally no different, no more important, no more grievous than that suffered by millions in all corners of the world. However, in how they affect human history politically, economically, and ideologically, some places, times, and events have an outsize impact. Snyder argues that the Bloodlands are such a place and time. Recent academic history has examined how the triumphal meta-narratives of imperialism and liberal progress that still structure many popular and academic understandings of the past, have blinded us to other, equally compelling histories. And when the present refuses to follow the scripts we want to impose on it, rethinking those that we have imposed on the past can perhaps help us see the present a bit more clearly.

Wishing all of us a great year, and stay tuned for the our History Department Social and Schmoozefest later this semester!

David Garrett

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Antoly Kuznetsov, *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Girard, 1970).

# Current Student's Summer Projects

**Clara Barclay '23:**

"With support from a Reed President's Summer Fellowship grant, I've spent this summer exploring bison ranching in the American West. Why do people ranch, visit, and eat bison, and what might these "why's" tell us about perceptions of western history? After some background reading, I hit the road and spent about three weeks meandering from Portland to northeastern Wyoming and back visiting bison-related spots and talking to ranchers and other locals about their experiences with bison. Currently (mid-August), I'm back in Portland getting started on an article about what I've learned.

I found that while ranchers noted that these bison are not wildlife, both producers and consumers often still viewed them as artifacts of an iconic and imagined past. While this may drive bison consumption, it also minimizes the darker moments of their history, and it distracts from the material reality of present-day bison ranching. In addition to highlighting the pervasiveness of the myth of the west, I think this phenomenon emphasizes that when we think about conservation and sustainable food systems, we need to understand where our food comes from in both a historical and a material sense.

A lot of people made this experience possible for me: Francisco Beltrán, Radhika Natarajan, and Josh Howe all had great advice as I got started, and I couldn't have gone anywhere without support from Center for Life Beyond Reed and the President's Summer Fund. Most of all, I'm hugely appreciative of everyone I met who took the time to share their stories with me."



# Current Student's Summer Projects Continued



**Milo Wetherall '24:**

"This is my second summer working at the San Francisco Railway Museum. Working in our small museum has given me a newfound appreciation for history and its impact on public policy. The San Francisco Railway Museum lets people explore the history of public transit in San Francisco and fundraises to ensure that San Francisco's fleet of historic PCC streetcars stays on the rails.

At the museum we like to say we are both the smallest and biggest museum in San Francisco. Our space is quite small. We are packed full of displays of old streetcars and transit tokens from across the country. The streetcars rolling down the F-Line are what makes our museum the biggest in the city! The streetcars running up and down Market and Embarcadero streets let visitors and locals alike enjoy a mode of mass transit that once dominated urban landscapes. Each of San Francisco's historic streetcars are painted to honor the liveries of other cities' retired streetcars. Being able to connect to the past keeps the memory of a different era alive and reminds San Franciscans everyday of the importance of public transportation.

Seeing people from across the world marvel at the history on our tracks and in our museum reminds me of why I am so glad to be a history major. During my time here I have spoken with everyone from people who grew up riding streetcars in their heyday to student researchers learning about how to improve transit infrastructures. What unites our guests is a desire to see a robust public infrastructure system that equally serves all residents of San Francisco.

The most important thing I have learned is how history is used to hold those in power accountable. 70 years ago, like in many other American cities, San Francisco's streetcars were ripped up by unaccountable politicians in the name of "urban renewal". New York's Robert Moses is infamous for his development projects. Less known is San Francisco's own Justin Herman, who is responsible for the destruction of communities of color across San Francisco. A notable example is Geary Boulevard, where hundreds of Black families were displaced to construct a new road that removed vital public transit resources. These projects destroyed communities, particularly communities of color, by removing housing for freeways and abandoning streetcar systems. The result today is communities underserved by a strained public transit system.

Our museum hopes to prevent this from happening again by educating people about the history of mass transit and the power of community activism against unaccountable government action. Citizen protests prevented the formation of more freeways in San Francisco and helped return streetcars to our streets. By keeping history alive today, we can help hold those in authority accountable and improve public transit infrastructure in San Francisco.

If you are in San Francisco, come stop by!"



# The Origin of Globalization: Three Mr. Smiths in China


Assistant Professor of History Xue Zhang

To prepare for my course Early Modern China and the World: 1300–1900, I revisited the Macartney Mission of 1792–94—the first British embassy to China—and tried to catch up with the latest scholarship on the subject. Jessica Hanser’s *Mr. Smith Goes to China: Three Scots in the Making of Britain’s Global Empire* (Yale University Press, 2019) caught my eye. The cover of the book features a British man wearing a red coat and green waistcoat brocaded with golden threads and holding a ceramic vase. The coat and waistcoat were typical daywear for men in eighteenth-century Britain, while the gradient blue vase appears to be an import from China. The image comes from a Chinese scroll (dated ca. 1751) which portrays the non-Han-Chinese peoples inhabiting the frontiers of Qing China (1644–1911) and the Western peoples trading with the Qing. For a long time, textbooks described the Macartney Mission in the last years of the eighteenth century as China’s missed golden opportunity to join global commerce on an equal footing with the West. About half a century after Lord Macartney’s unsuccessful mission, Britain waged the Opium War and opened up the Chinese market via gunboat diplomacy. The painting of the British man, however, indicates the existence of trade between Britain and China long before the Opium War. Despite a lack of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, the trade between British India and southeast China was well established in the eighteenth century.

(cont on page 7)



The Image of the British man in the copy of The Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples (*Huang Qing zhigong tu*) in the Palace Museum Taipei

The protagonists of Hanser's book, the three George Smiths, invariably began their careers in India and then traveled or even relocated to China. Theoretically, the British East India Company enjoyed a monopoly in Asia, but neither of the three Mr. Smiths were Company employees. Their stories were largely buried in the archives of the Company as interlopers, although the employees of the Company did rely on their financial service to manage their wealth and send their money back to Britain. The three Mr. Smiths helped their clients in India invest in China and transferred their wealth from Asia to Britain. Specifically, they transported their clients' commodities across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, and sold them in China and southwest Asia. The profits were to be deposited in the British East India Company's treasury in Canton, a Chinese port city, and remitted to London. In this way, the three Smiths and many other middlemen provided British expats with an efficient means of moving money through a global commercial network. China had been woven into the fabric of this global network constructed by private British traders at least half a century before Lord Macartney. The first George Smith, known as George Smith of Madras, sailed to India in 1754. In the following decade, he made a fortune by mediating the trade between British India and China.

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We tend to associate globalization with transnational corporations. No matter what attitude one holds, it is tempting to view corporate giants as one of the most conspicuous indicators of the globalization process or a possible de-globalization in the post-COVID era. However, the microhistory of the three George Smiths shows that at the dawn of the globalization era, individuals played a bigger role in transregional exchanges. Profit-seeking traders were able to bypass sovereign powers to build an informal commercial network that connected Britain, India, Southeast Asia, and China. The network was fragile—subject to natural hazards, political instability, trade conflicts, and many other unpredictable factors. In fact, in the late nineteenth century, intermediaries like the Mr. Smiths and the British investor they served constantly lobbied the British government for a formal embassy to China to institutionalize the trade between China and British India, the better to protect the British citizens' interests in China. In this sense, the Macartney Mission was not a beginning. On the contrary, it marks the end of an era.

## **Guest Lecture Announcement:**

### **"The Origins of Indigenous Constitutionalism: Choctaw and Cherokee Governance in the Removal Era"**

**Tanner Allread (Stanford University)**

**Wednesday, September 21, 2022, 4:30pm**

**Vollum Lecture Hall, Reed College**

**Free and open to the public; masks required**

**For two centuries, Native nations in the United States have written constitutions to govern their affairs and affirm their status as sovereigns. Exploring the origins of this tradition of Indigenous constitutionalism in the era of Indian removal, this lecture focuses on the first written tribal constitutions, the Choctaw Constitution of 1826 and the Cherokee Constitution of 1827. It analyzes how the Choctaw and Cherokee nations constructed hybrid legal regimes and tribal state apparatuses that simultaneously asserted control over the people and activities within their lands, opposed federal entreaties to cede those lands, and reflected Indigenous understandings of sovereignty. Ultimately, this lecture calls for the recognition of the Removal era as a generative period for forms of tribal governance and the concept of tribal sovereignty in American law. Tanner Allread (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) is a Ph.D. candidate in History at Stanford University and holds a J.D. from Stanford Law School. Sponsored by the Office for Institutional Diversity, New Scholar Series, and the History Department. Please contact [minardi@reed.edu](mailto:minardi@reed.edu) with questions.**

## **Thesis Fridays Return!**

**Thesis Fridays is an optional and informal opportunity for senior thesis-writers in history (and related interdisciplinary fields) to talk about the travails and joys of thesis-writing with other historians and to share ideas for making the thesis process less stressful and more fun. We meet approximately once a month on Fridays. Each meeting revolves around a particular theme related to whatever thesis-writers are likely to be doing at that point in the year.**

**Please contact Margot Minardi if you have questions or ideas for future sessions.**



# Interview with Visiting Assistant Professor of History, Liz Matsushita

## Introduce yourself!

My name is Liz Matsushita and I'll be the Visiting Assistant Professor in History and Humanities for 2022-2024!

## Where are you visiting Reed from? What other institutions have you taught at?

I finished my PhD in History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2021, and spent the last year as a visiting assistant professor at Claremont McKenna College in California, also teaching history and humanities courses.

## What's your specialty when it comes to History?

I specialize in Middle Eastern and North African history. Most of my research took place in Morocco and Tunisia, and I concentrate on the colonial and post-colonial period (roughly the late 19th to the mid-late 20th century). As a musician who concentrated on music in undergrad, I've become especially interested in the ways that music has served as a historical force and a political category - in North Africa, how practices, performances, and studies of music could serve as tools of colonial control, nationalist resistance, or forms of racialization.

## We're very excited to have you at Reed. Can you tell me a bit about the classes you will be teaching?

In the fall I'll be teaching a course called "The 20th Century Middle East through Music," which explores the modern history of the Middle East/North Africa region through several significant musical genres and artists. I find this to be an engaging and interdisciplinary way to approach a history that is often limited to high politics and conflict, while also introducing students to the concept of music as a historical source. In the spring I'm teaching "The History of the Sahara" which seeks to transcend traditional regional classifications in order to bring together North African and so-called "sub-Saharan" African histories. I'll also be a conference leader for Humanities 110.

## What are you most excited about in coming to Reed?

I've heard so many great things about the students and intellectual life here at Reed! I'm very excited to meet and work with the students here, and to get this incredible opportunity to instruct history in a liberal arts setting that values critical inquiry and interdisciplinarity. I also love working with students one-on-one so I encourage anyone with relevant interests (not just those in my classes) to reach out to me!

## Tell me a bit about work you've done outside of teaching.

I'm currently working on a few publications, including a chapter on the political soundscapes of Tangier and another on Andalusian musical revival in 20th-century North Africa. I'm really interested in public engagement and service work, and seeking ways to bring my work to a wider audience outside of academia. I'm also beginning a side project that dives more into my own family history and Japanese-American communities in California, particularly at the moment of the incarceration in 1942.

# What are Alumni Doing? Let's Catch Up!

**Maurice Isserman '73:** Picking up on a topic I first wrote about in my history thesis, I am completing a history of American Communism from its founding in 1919 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

**Aelyn Speath '84:** I'm studying classical and operatic singing with two different voice teachers and recently sang a Schubert lied and a Mozart aria in a student recital.

**Jason McGraw '97:** I recently received an Eccles Centre Visiting Fellowship from the British Library. In Summer 2023, I will be traveling to London for a month or more of research in the Sound Archives and other collections of BL. Also, I just got back from sailing on Lake Michigan. It was my first time, and it was a blast!

**Tom Weaver '06:** Launching Europe's first open-ended private debt fund for retail investors.

**Vijay Shah '93:** In addition to activism, Vijay Shah '93 is collaborating on a historical climate about the civil rights movement. As a student of Americanists Richard Fox and John Tomsich, he would like to reach a broad audience, including youth. "Our book is striving to convey the past in a vivid, dramatic way."

**Scott Elsworth '76:** There's been a bit of news regarding my most recent book, *THE GROUNDBREAKING: The Tulsa Race Massacre and an American City's Search for Justice*, which, like my first book, grew out of my 1976 Reed History thesis. *The Groundbreaking* made the longlist for both the 2021 National Book Award and the 2021 Carnegie Medal, and the shortlist for the 2021 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize. It also came out in paperback in May.



Senator Warren holding Elsworth's *The Groundbreaking* outside of Detroit in July


# Summer Reading

**Radhika Natarajan: Colin Grant**  
*Homecoming: Voice of the Windrush Generation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019). This book gathers together oral history interviews with the generation of migrants who traveled from the Caribbean to Britain between 1945 and 1970. I love how it prioritizes their voices and experiences with only a little framing and contextualization.

**Theodore N Kaplan '63: Sashi Tharoor**  
*An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* (Delhi: Aleph, 2016). He's brilliant... I say that after meeting him and listening to him on how he came to write the book... lots of historical Biography and rereading the Judge Dee mystery novels by van Gulik based on Tang dynasty histories.

**Jenny Benevento '01: Daviel Immerwahl**  
*How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Picador, 2020). It's a very readable history of the colonies America has had, and how they've kept their history out of American textbooks. It's so engaging and every 10 pages my mind would be blown and I'd have to ask a friend, "DID YOU KNOW THIS?!?!?"

# Let's Get Sentimental! What do Reedies Miss About the History Department?



**Eva Schwartz '08:** I miss the camaraderie and having lots of people to bounce ideas off of.

**Thomas Burns '98:** The legendary Ed Segel.

**Julie Landweber '93:** The camaraderie!  
The intellectual give-and-take!

**Nikki Georgopoulos '12:** Seminars on the lawn as the cherry blossoms bloom.

**Andre Wooten '71:** Prof. Jones and Prof. McClendon in the history department challenged you to read everything written on the subjects that one is interested in and wants to understand if not master. An on-going task.

Thank you to everyone for  
their submissions!!